

Minutes (approved 10/20/08)
Meeting of the County Council and the Howard County Board of Education
October 15, 2008

The meeting was called to order by Council Chairperson Courtney Watson at 8:15 a.m. on October 15, 2008 in the Board Rooms A and B, Board of Education Building.

Council members present: Calvin Ball, Mary Kay Sigaty, Greg Fox, and Courtney Watson. Jen Terrasa arrived at 8:35 a.m.

Board of Education members present: Diane Mikulis, Frank Aquino, Ellen Flynn Giles, Patricia Gordon, Janet Siddiqui

Cost Savings: Ray Brown, Chief Financial Officer, summarized savings initiatives in energy consumption, technology, print shop, school transportation, and health benefits. He noted that the staff is working with the County on the Cooperation and Efficiency in Government Work Group, which is looking at cooperative efforts to save funds.

School Performance: Linda Wise, Chief Academic Officer, updated the group on the progress being made by schools that were identified as not meeting state standards for improvement. She mentioned that Murray Hill Elementary had been removed from the list, as they have met State standards. She noted that Oakland Mills High School barely missed making standards. She outlined various initiatives, including support and training for teachers, that are underway to hasten progress in the remaining schools.

Impact of Possible State Budget Cuts: Ray Brown summarized the effect of the expected cut in the Cost of Education Index for Howard County. He said that the staff is looking at ways to handle the loss of \$1.461 million, which represents half of its entitlement under this part of the State aid program. The members and board staff discussed the more troublesome potential for a cut of up to \$45 million in State funds paid to cover pension costs of teachers and other education professionals.

Green Building Project: Ken Roey distributed a handout summarizing the status of the project at Northfield Elementary School, which will be the first LEED certified renovation project for the schools. He said that the project is in the design and development stage, and they are still defining elements to improve efficiency. He noted that the school system will have to prove the operational efficiencies at the end of the project to attain certification.

Enrollment and School Capacity: Ken Roey and Joel Gallihue summarized the school capacities in light of enrollments as of September 30, 2008. They reported no surprises. The stresses are in the Route 1 corridor, particularly with projected development expected in that area. Bellows Springs and Elkridge Elementary already are experiencing crowding. They are keeping an eye on Forest Ridge, Running Brook, Phelps Luck, Howard, Reservoir, Wilde Lake Middle, Waterloo, and Patuxent Valley for possible future stresses as development and neighborhood turn-over affect enrollments.

They also discussed the plan for the redevelopment of Town Center in Columbia. They noted that more recent student yield studies project higher numbers of students coming from apartments and condos than the study that was used by General Growth Properties (GGP) in their development of their plan for downtown. The board's staff and the representatives of GGP are talking regularly about the school needs. The Board staff foresees a need for an additional school to serve an expanded Town Center.

There followed a discussion of the redistricting plans. The Board will appoint a committee shortly for the 2010 redistricting. Joel Gallihue explained the assumptions underlying the three scenarios that have been posted on the Board's web-site. He asked Council members to cooperate in explaining to their worried constituents that these are not recommendations or even a starting point for the citizens committee. They simply represent the effect of redistricting under three different philosophies. There will be considerable opportunity for citizen involvement in the redistricting process over the next year.

Ms. Watson recognized the service of Board member Diane Mikulis, who is not running for re-election.

There was consensus agreement to adopt the following schedule of meetings for 2009:

February 4, 2009 (Board Room)
April 1 (8930 Stanford Boulevard)
June 10 (8930 Stanford Boulevard)
October 7 (Board Room)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.